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## **STATE'S PRESCRIPTION DRUG TAKE BACK PROGRAM A HIT**

BISMARCK –The state's new "Prescription Drug Take Back" pilot program has proven overwhelmingly popular with North Dakota residents. Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem launched the program in conjunction with his Prescription Drug Abuse summit held last week.

"The response was immediate," said Stenehjem. "Even before the conference started, people were coming in to ask where to turn in their unwanted prescription drugs. Some were turning in plastic bags full," he continued.

In Fargo, agents at the conference site collected over thirty pounds of prescription drugs in one afternoon. More than sixty pounds of prescription drugs have been turned in to date, including commonly abused drugs such as hydrocodone, morphine and codeine.

"Sixty pounds is a lot when we are talking about prescription drugs dispensed in milligrams. It's the equivalent of 34,000 dosages of hydrocodone, for example, and now those drugs will be disposed of and never hit the streets or our high schools," Stenehjem said.

The Take Back pilot program began last week in Fargo, Grand Forks, Bismarck and Minot. As word spread, people in other communities contacted their local police departments to ask about the program.

"By the second day, the West Fargo Police Department had received so many calls that the Chief asked to be included in the pilot program," said Stenehjem. "Fortunately, we had one disposal container still available."

Take Back prescription drug disposal containers are located inside the police departments in five cities - Grand Forks, Fargo, West Fargo, Minot and Bismarck - but with the success of the pilot program, Stenehjem is considering expanding the program. "My office has been fielding calls all week about bringing the program to other parts of the state," he said.

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